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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan)

later: Mrs. TAVARES ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 105: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/50/84-E/1995/12, A/50/114, A/50/156, A/50/163, A/50/181-E/1995/65, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/370, A/50/374, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/454, A/50/473; A/CONF.166/9)

1. Ms. JANKEY (Botswana) said that the needs of young people must be taken into account in national economic and social development programmes particularly in view of the many pressing youth problems (unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy and health-related problems such as HIV/AIDS), which, if not attended to adequately, could lead them to anti-social activities. Governments and the international community should take appropriate and effective measures to deal with the problems of youth, such as involving them in decision-making at the local, national and international levels and executing development programmes. Young people must have the necessary education and skills. To achieve precisely that objective, Botswana had committed itself to promoting universal access to education up to junior secondary level and had adopted in 1994 new policies on education aimed at increasing access to both the secondary and tertiary levels of education. While it was the obligation of Governments and individuals to help young people develop and participate in the life of society, the international community should provide assistance in that regard.

2. Mrs. ROHANI ABDUL KARIM (Malaysia) noted with satisfaction that the world programme of action for youth should make it possible to give them the necessary skills and a sense of social responsibility and said that the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year was an opportunity for the Malaysian Government to reaffirm its commitment to respond to the needs and aspirations of Malaysian youth and that the elaboration of the world programme of action for youth towards the year 2000 and beyond was of great importance.

3. Of the 1 billion young people in the world, 84 per cent were in developing countries, and over 60 per cent of them were in Asia. No one could ignore the socio-economic implications of that phenomenon since, in many parts of the world, particularly developing countries, unemployment was increasing and there was a lack of resources for social services and education. That situation, if left unchecked, could have disastrous consequences for young people, who might then be drawn into juvenile delinquency, crime and drug abuse. Accordingly, youth in developing countries required better health care and access to better education, training, technical assistance and, above all, credit.

4. Although the problems of youth were paramount, problems affecting older persons, whose relative and absolute population size was increasing, should not be neglected. In accordance with her country's philosophy of a caring society, Malaysia had focused, within the framework of its national development programme, Vision 2020, on the needs of the ageing; and services relating to health, housing and transportation had already been instituted.

5. Malaysia had undertaken programmes in the area of treatment, rehabilitation, training and education to encourage self-reliance among the disabled. The United Nations should strengthen its cooperation with non-governmental organizations in identifying the needs of disabled persons with regard to training and training methods and should continue to implement its Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Malaysia would welcome additional information which facilitated the implementation of the Rules.

6. Her country recognized that the International Year of the Family in 1994 had made it possible to reaffirm the importance of the family, whose increasing disintegration was leading to a breakdown of people's ability to cope and its consequences: crime, child abuse, violence against women, trafficking in women and children for the sex trade, substance abuse, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, divorce, abandoned babies and old people, increased mental illness and so forth. The time had come to return to family life and values and strengthen the institution of the family by adopting policies that would enable families and each of their members to manage economic and social change positively.

7. Mr. ADAWA (Kenya) noted the historical importance of the World Summit for Social Development and said that for full and effective implementation of the commitments made during the various recent United Nations conferences, the industrialized countries and international development assistance agencies should help finance the corresponding programmes in the developing countries, particularly, sub-Saharan African countries. In that connection, Kenya welcomed the inclusion of an additional General Assembly agenda item entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development", and would actively participate in the discussion on it.

8. Kenya firmly believed that since people and their social needs should be at the centre of development, priority should be given to the eradication of poverty, the elimination of obstacles to economic and social development, the expansion of productive employment and the creation of a favourable international economic and social environment. While the Government of Kenya was firmly committed to its economic reform process, including the structural adjustment programmes, its reforms included measures to protect the poor and vulnerable persons. For that reason, his delegation continued to urge the international community to improve the social situation in Africa by taking an integrated and comprehensive approach to development as the most effective strategy for the eradication of poverty, designing structural adjustment programmes which took into account the social dimensions of development and aimed in particular to protect vulnerable population groups, endeavouring to find a lasting solution to the debt burden (by reducing or cancelling the bilateral and multilateral debts of low-income countries, particularly those in Africa), allocating new resources to accelerate social development (not merely reallocating existing ones), and increasing productivity through wider and more intensive use of science and technology for sustainable development.

9. In order to protect the poor from the adverse effects of its economic reforms, the Kenyan Government had allocated 5.58 billion Kenya shillings in its 1994-1995 budget to address the social dimensions of development. While that amount was far from the magnitude of funds required, Kenya warmly thanked the

international community, non-governmental organizations and the private sector for the financial support that they had provided for that purpose. Furthermore, Kenya would continue to ensure that the resources allocated for the social dimensions of development would be increased at the national level and called on the international community and international agencies to continue their assistance in that endeavour.

10. With regard to youth, Kenya welcomed the decision by the General Assembly under resolution 49/152 to devote plenary meetings to mark the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year and to consider, with a view to adopting, the world programme of action for youth towards the year 2000 and beyond. Concerned at the numerous problems confronting Kenyan youth, his Government would seek, during the current development plan for the period 1994-1996, to establish a comprehensive national youth development policy, set up financial support for education and training opportunities for young people and accelerate the self-help income-generating projects for youth. In addition, the National Youth Service, which had been established in 1963, would receive greater assistance in order to expand its training programmes, since technical training institutes had been given the necessary support to train youth to take jobs in the informal sectors and actively participate in the development and promotion of small-scale enterprises.

11. The international community had passed various measures to benefit older persons, such as the International Plan of Action on Ageing. Kenya was therefore assisting the United Nations programme on ageing and the African Society of Gerontology to develop and implement a regional programme of activities on ageing. As in most developing countries with a large rural population older persons in Kenya had thus far been cared for by their families, with whom they had traditionally strong ties. Those ties were being eroded as a result of increasing rural migration, and the Government had had to enlist the assistance of non-governmental organizations as well as religious institutions to provide assistance to older persons in need.

12. With reference to disabled persons, Kenya had supported the adoption by the General Assembly of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and it welcomed the efforts made by United Nations bodies to benefit that group. On the national level, the President of Kenya had personally led a campaign to improve the situation of disabled persons and to change attitudes towards them. The Government had put in place special educational programmes for the disabled and had taken measures to facilitate their participation in business and other income-generating activities.

13. With reference to the family, Kenya was strongly of the view that any people-centred development must of necessity focus on the family. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly had appealed to donors to pledge further contributions to the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the Family in order to finance projects, particularly in developing countries. Kenya hoped that appeal would be heeded and given the appropriate attention. Lastly, the Government of Kenya was committed to improving the welfare of the Kenyan population, and for that reason had worked over the years to reduce the high rate of population increase through the Family Planning Association of Kenya.

14. Mr. FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) said that the World Summit for Social Development deserved credit for putting man at the centre of the development process. It was also important to establish how much economic policies and models contributed to meeting the material and spiritual needs of the individual at each stage of development. Economic success and democratic institutions were irrelevant if millions of individuals were the victims of discrimination, xenophobia, unemployment, or lacked proper shelter, and if tens of thousands of children were dying of avoidable and curable diseases. The neoliberal doctrine, by sacrificing health, education, culture and social security, had jeopardized social and human development.

15. The priorities and objectives laid out in the Report on the World Social Situation, 1993 (ST/ESA/235-E/1993/50/Rev.1) should be upheld, allowing for the new realities and the problems encountered by mankind. Particular attention should be given to the social situation of developing countries in order to adopt concrete measures to make improvements. The report of the Secretary-General on a conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 (A/50/114) which was structured on several important themes, as well as the report on observance of the International Year of the Family (A/50/370), merited close study.

16. The path to development based upon a just and equitable division of wealth being pursued by Cuba had allowed it to make significant progress in regard to health, education, employment, cultural development and social liberty. Cuba's experience demonstrated that not only could social development precede economic development but that it could help to bring it about. It was for that reason that Cuba hoped to see the gains of the World Summit for Social Development consolidated.

17. Mrs. Tavares Alvarez (Dominican Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

18. Ms. ZHANG Fenq/Kun (China) said that the work done by the United Nations in the area of social development had been remarkable in many respects, particularly in regard to the issues of ageing and disability. The international community and Governments had made significant progress in implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing since its adoption in 1982. The problem of an ageing population was a general phenomenon from which China was not exempt; indeed, it had the largest population of older persons in the world. The Chinese Government had therefore set a number of objectives in order to guarantee older persons the medical care which would allow them to contribute to the development of society and to live happily. Several measures had been adopted to look after their interests and meet specific goals. Each year on 9 September of the lunar calendar, China observed the day of respect for older persons, which was the occasion of many activities in their honour. China was therefore pleased to welcome the conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

19. China, attached great importance to the question of disabled persons, and was convinced that implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities would make it possible to improve the situation of that disadvantaged group. In her view, additional resources should be mobilized

by the United Nations system to further implement the Rules. For its part, China had endeavoured to realize the objectives of equality, participation and common sharing. The needs of persons with disabilities were taken into account in planning for social and economic development, and practical measures had been adopted to improve their situation, particularly in the areas of rehabilitation, medical care, education and employment. The Government had also provided underdeveloped regions with specially earmarked funds to help persons with disabilities to receive training and employment. In addition, China had passed a series of laws to protect their rights and interests.

20. As part of the International Year of the Family, China had organized numerous activities, holding symposiums and raising public awareness of the question. The Chinese delegation hoped that the United Nations would continue to give the matter the attention it deserved.

21. Mr. CRAPATUREANU (Romania) said that he was pleased that, at the initiative of the Danish delegation, the question of follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit would be considered in plenary meetings, thereby providing an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of views. The World Summit for Social Development had had as its main focus a new social contract at the global level and the notion of collective social responsibility. States should work together to ensure social and economic development and adopt measures to favour democracy, social justice and human rights. Such cooperation between developed and developing countries should include the United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and the international financial institutions. Economic and social progress and development should be considered through an integrated approach which could lead to concrete results. Romania, which was in search of a new model for socio-economic development based on the values of democracy, law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as a free market economy, was particularly interested in the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit.

22. Against the background of the reforms which it had undertaken, Romania proposed to create institutional structures that would allow it to decentralize social protection by involving economic agents, the local public administration, non-governmental organizations and charities, thereby focusing on the most vulnerable zones and categories and encouraging the population to participate directly in such action. Furthermore, in an effort to offer equal opportunities to persons with disabilities in order to mobilize human resources and improve the integration of marginalized groups, the Romanian Government had put in place various arrangements giving them access to education, including at home, and providing for medical care, medicines, free transportation and exemption from many categories of taxes. The State secretariat for the handicapped was responsible for the implementation of the Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Romania congratulated the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Social Development for the manner in which he was implementing his mandate and encouraged him to continue in the same manner.

23. He recalled that all societies had a duty not only to look after their elderly members by providing the geriatric care they needed but also to make the most of their experience by encouraging them to participate actively in society. The adoption of a conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation for and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 showed how

high the phenomenon of ageing ranked among the international community's priorities.

24. Where the family was concerned, the Romanian Government had adopted a series of policies to protect the family as the basic unit of society, in particular from the social impact of the economic transition, with the cooperation of the non-governmental organizations and the Romanian National Committee for the International Year of the Family.

25. Since youth was the hope of every nation, it devolved on the family, the Government and the international community to initiate efforts to allow young people to develop and flourish. Romania hoped that the world programme of action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond would provide an important framework for guidance in youth matters.

26. Mr. GUBAREVICH (Belarus) considered that the large number and the dimensions of social problems called in question the very bases of the progress of civilization. His Government welcomed the fact that the international community had admitted in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action that it must provide assistance to the countries in transition in order to enable them to deal with their social problems. The time had come for the bodies and agencies of the United Nations system to take practical steps to make those obligations a reality. His Government appreciated the work done by the Commission on Social Development; it was convinced that its re-election to membership of the Commission showed that the role it had played in the latter's work had been recognized.

27. There was no question that economic development should improve the social situation of the population. While at the country level that task devolved on the State, internationally it was incumbent on the United Nations. Regrettably, he had to point out that it was precisely in socio-economic matters that the United Nations revealed its greatest weakness, for its rhetoric exceeded its actions. It would be desirable for the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Council to be reinforced and for the Council to elaborate standards of social development for the international community.

28. In the six months which had elapsed since the World Summit for Social Development, social problems in Belarus had worsened. The gradual economic reform which the transition to a market economy required was having adverse repercussions on the population's standard of living and particularly on the most vulnerable sectors such as the disabled, elderly persons and young people. Some persons even believed that more than half of the Belarusian population lived below the poverty line. The growth of unemployment, currently standing at 2 per cent, was kept in check artificially by reducing the length of the working day and the working week and by granting unpaid or part-paid holidays so that concealed unemployment was six to eight times higher than the official figure. It should also be pointed out that the birth rate had fallen by half.

29. A characteristic of Belarus was its ageing population, which was forcing the Government to increase expenditure on retirement and medical assistance and since 1994 had led it to train gerontologists and psychologists. In accordance with the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development,

Belarus had prepared a comprehensive programme for older persons. It fully supported the holding of an International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

30. In endeavouring to resolve the problems of the disabled, whose numbers were increasing substantially, Belarus was preparing, despite its economic difficulties, to implement an overall programme for the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of the disabled and to promulgate laws in that regard. Other countries in transition were encountering similar problems, and his Government would like the United Nations to help train specialists in that area. The Belarusian delegation welcomed the action taken by the Special Rapporteur to follow up the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and hoped that the Member States of the United Nations would adopt those Rules as the central principle of their national strategies.

31. The serious economic difficulties facing Belarus were also having repercussions on the family. A family allowances act did exist and families had the right to various forms of tax relief. Many legal, educational, psychological, medical and social problems remained to be solved, however. Realizing that it would have to draft special programmes which would take the needs of families into account, the Government of Belarus would be grateful if countries which were more advanced in matters of social protection could help it. His delegation was satisfied with the results of the International Year of the Family and hoped that the United Nations would continue to implement the programmes it had initiated in that connection.

32. Belarus was endeavouring to reform its inefficient economy while minimizing the repercussions of that reform on the social sector. The social security system inherited from the Soviet regime no longer met requirements and social support needed to be re-targeted. The additional laws which had been promulgated did not suffice to ensure that the population received better social protection. While the social reforms the Government had attempted and the stoicism of the population were helping to maintain a relative measure of political stability, Belarus' social problems, if left unresolved, could become a matter of concern for the entire international community. Belarus thus considered that the United Nations specialized agencies should support its efforts in that area. Other than the social problems common to many countries, Belarus had problems of its own deriving from the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Nearly 2 million of its inhabitants had been subjected to radiation, but because of the severe financial constraints it was experiencing, Belarus could devote no more than 18 per cent of its budget to remedying the consequences of the disaster. It was therefore in extreme need of assistance from the international organizations, voluntary contribution funds and other States.

33. Belarus would do everything in its power to implement rapidly the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, but it was having to face its many difficulties alone. It was convinced that a global programme of assistance to countries in transition needed to be adopted within the United Nations system; such a programme would provide measures to create or improve social protection systems under market economy conditions, set up an infrastructure for environmental protection, job security and the health of the population, train

and provide refresher courses for managerial staff in the context of a market economy and eradicate poverty. Belarus would be grateful to the United Nations for any measures which it might be able to take to alleviate, however little, the social difficulties afflicting the people of Belarus.

34. Mr. ZIAUDDIN (Bangladesh) said that few concrete plans had emerged from the elaborate Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development and that the follow-up to the Summit had thus far not been encouraging. The general situation in the poorest countries continued to deteriorate and social disintegration, poverty, hunger, unemployment, rising crime and economic problems continued to retard social development and challenge the achievement of social justice.

35. Social development was inevitably linked with economic development and called for an integrated approach. For developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, the necessary national efforts must be supplemented and reinforced by adequate international support and resources; that depended totally on the necessary political will.

36. In Bangladesh, social problems stemmed from poverty and poor economic conditions. The promotion of social development through poverty alleviation, employment generation and human resource development formed the cornerstone of the national development effort. With a view to implementing an integrated strategy for social and economic development, the current Government had launched a new development perspective, and a major share of the development budget was allocated to the social sector, with priority given to education, health and population control. In order to promote social integration, Bangladesh had set up special programmes for women, children, youth, disabled and elderly persons and minorities focusing on reducing illiteracy (through compulsory primary education, non-formal education and adult literacy programmes and innovative schemes such as the food-for-education programme aimed at reducing the drop-out rate), with special emphasis placed on the education of the girl child. The Government had also undertaken innovative programmes to alleviate poverty and, in particular, to address the feminization of poverty, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and through the regional mechanisms of the South-Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

37. Given the role of youth in bringing about social, economic and political change, concerted action was needed to mobilize their creative potential for the benefit of society. Accordingly, Bangladesh welcomed the formulation of the World Programme of Action for Youth towards the Year 2000 and Beyond. In Bangladesh, where young people comprised one third of the population, a national youth policy had been adopted and programmes were being undertaken to promote youth participation in various areas.

38. Bangladesh believed in the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons and, despite its lack of means and resources, had launched special assistance programmes and set quotas for housing and employment for disabled persons. Although the problems relating to ageing were less acute in Bangladesh than in other countries, largely because of its traditions and customs, the country remained committed to implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing and had launched national action plans to ensure the full participation

of the elderly in society. Bangladesh also welcomed the conceptual framework of a programme for the observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999. Ensuring equality for minorities and other marginalized groups and enabling them to participate fully in society remained priority objectives of the country's social integration and development efforts. Bangladesh also considered that the role of the family as a means of social integration must be recognized and revitalized.

39. Having intensified its efforts at the national and regional levels, Bangladesh believed that it was now necessary to enhance cooperation between the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the international financial institutions and to strengthen existing United Nations social development programmes.

40. Ms. HORIUCHI (Japan) said that social development must be promoted in order to ensure stability and prosperity in a world plagued by regional conflicts which often arose because of poverty and social instability. Her country therefore believed that the United Nations must tackle the social problems that were of concern to the whole world. Her delegation would take up that matter in greater detail when the General Assembly considered the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, but believed that the agenda of the Third Committee should reflect the progress made and the obstacles encountered in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Japan supported the efforts of the United Nations to prepare a report on the world social situation and urged that the report should take into account the review and appraisal of the implementation of those instruments.

41. Her delegation supported in principle the draft framework for the 1997 Report on the World Social Situation contained in document A/50/84-E/1995/12. Greater attention should, however, be given to human resource development and to the issues of equality and equity. Poverty should be addressed in the context of those major questions, which would form two separate clusters.

42. Her delegation would present its views on youth at the special meetings of the General Assembly devoted to that question on 26 and 27 October.

43. Given that Japan was a rapidly ageing society (while persons aged 65 and over had represented 14.1 per cent of the population in 1994, that figure was expected to reach 25.5 per cent by the year 2020), the Japanese Government was working vigorously to provide older persons with decent living conditions and the opportunity to participate in society according to their abilities. A target should be set for the year 2001 for the creation of community-based programmes that would provide older persons with the care they needed and encourage them to participate in society which they would enrich with their skills and wisdom. The International Year of Older Persons, to be observed in 1999, would provide an opportunity for raising global awareness of that issue, and Japan would strive to support the activities conducted by the United Nations in connection with the Year.

44. The International Year of the Family, observed in 1994, and the recent international conferences currently being followed up, had raised global awareness of issues relating to the family. Consequently it was neither

necessary nor wise to develop a new plan of action. It was Japan's view that within the family there should be respect for fundamental rights and the equal status of all individuals, and that in formulating and implementing policies, consideration should be given to the diverse forms the family might take and to the changing pattern of family life. Japan was striving to promote equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women and, as part of those efforts, in 1995 it had ratified Convention 156 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which dealt with Workers with Family Responsibilities.

45. Japan welcomed the report prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Social Development on monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (A/50/374). The Standard Rules must be implemented by Member States within their national systems, particularly since, as the Special Rapporteur had emphasized, they promoted more vigorously than did the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, a goal to which the Japanese Government attached special importance. Japan's long-term programme for disabled persons, formulated some years previously, had been revised in 1993 to focus on eight major areas: public awareness, education and training, employment, health and medicine, welfare, human environment, sports and recreation, culture and international cooperation. There could be no doubt of Japan's commitment to implementing the World Programme of Action since in 1995 it had donated $100,000 to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Disability.

46. Social development could not be achieved by Governments alone. Non-governmental organizations and all international organizations should also play an active part.

47. Mr. MINOVES-TRIQUEL (Andorra) said that at the World Summit for Social Development, the heads of State and Government had made a commitment to reduce disparities, eradicate poverty and foster social integration. Lately the idea of security had a more personal meaning, with the individual now more concerned with feeling safe, providing for the members of his family and community and obtaining education for them. On the principle that all social development was people-centred, the Principality of Andorra had proposed adding to the Copenhagen Declaration a commitment, later adopted at the Summit, encouraging dialogue, concerted action and participation by all in the work of building a harmonious society.

48. Andorra was very concerned by unemployment among young people, who were the world's hope, for unemployment swept them towards poverty, drugs and crime. The situation was still more troubling in the developing countries, where the labour pool would increase by 2.3 per cent annually over the next 10 years, necessitating the creation of about 260 million new jobs. That fact must be taken into account in the follow-up to the World Summit and a way must be found to integrate the new generations into the labour force without thereby destroying opportunities for the less young who had long been part of it. In that connection, Andorra welcomed with satisfaction the decision of the General Assembly to declare 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. The needs of the disabled must also be borne in mind, guaranteeing their integration into the labour force by creating an environment in which they could thrive. Men and

women must come to be valued for their unique qualities and their specific gifts.

49. Lastly, Andorra attached great importance to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which its Minister for Foreign Affairs had recently signed in New York and its Parliament was preparing to ratify. The implementation of the Convention and the Copenhagen commitments would ensure the health and welfare of children, but that would require the United Nations to become a stronger body, more aware of the challenges before it on the issue of security, especially in the social sector.

50. Ms. ENKHTSETSEG (Mongolia) said that the possibility of a peaceful existence was no longer a certainty for the human family, which was in the grips of poverty, uprootedness, hunger and malnutrition, violence and discrimination, rising crime, drug addiction and infectious disease. In Copenhagen, the leaders of the nations participating in the World Summit for Social Development had recognized that those social ills were indeed a source of tension both within and among States, and they had pledged to make the conquest of poverty, the generation of productive employment and the fostering of safe and just societies their overriding goals. Mongolia hoped that the consideration by the General Assembly of agenda item 161 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit would provide fresh impetus to the follow-up at both national and international levels.

51. Her delegation, an original sponsor of the International Literacy Year, attached particular importance to the issue of education and literacy. During the observances of the International Year, national committees established in 118 countries had helped to mobilize public opinion and promote action by Governments and non-governmental organizations to promote education and combat illiteracy. It was more than symbolic that 1990 was also the year in which the number of the world's illiterate adults had stabilized. The objective of worldwide literacy was still now a top priority for the international community, since education was viewed less as a sectoral concern or a social service than as an engine for progress.

52. It was clear from the report of the Secretary-General and the Director General of the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the progress made and problems encountered in the struggle against illiteracy (A/50/181) that significant advances had been registered in the rise of literacy rates, the number of literate adults and school enrolment in many parts of the world. That progress was even more gratifying because it had come to embrace many developing countries, especially in East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, which had achieved approximately 90-per-cent literacy.

53. The same report, however, did not disguise the problems that still persisted: more than one adult in five was illiterate; more than three illiterates in five were women; and 129 million children of primary-school age were not in school - all of which required more effective mobilization at both the national and international levels.

54. Mongolia commended UNESCO for having pursued a unified approach to the follow-up to the International Literacy Year and the World Conference on

Education for All, whose common purpose had been to eradicate illiteracy and make education accessible to everyone.

55. Her delegation intended to submit a draft resolution on further cooperation in achieving education for all.

56. Mr. SALEH (Bahrain) said that the item under consideration was important because the human being was at the centre of social development. Social development aimed to improve the human situation, and in that sense it was behind all progress and all development, including economic development.

57. Development must guarantee the individual a clean and safe environment, and also the right to employment, education and health. It must also guarantee people the means of participating in the life of their community.

58. When adopting social development policies, not only must those closely interrelated issues be borne in mind, but also all sectors of the population must be made to participate in social development.

59. Given the central position of the family in society, its well-being was indispensable to that of society. That said, Bahrain's interest in the family was not dictated by social considerations but by cultural, religious and moral imperatives. His country offered all the conditions needed to allow the family to live honourably while following social customs and social and religious traditions.

60. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the observance of the International Year of the Family (A/50/370), Bahrain welcomed the efforts made by United Nations institutions and bodies to enhance the role of the family and guarantee the conditions for its social well-being. Private and governmental bodies in Bahrain participated in the 1994 observances of the International Year through activities intended to support the role of the family in society. By also participating in all conferences organized by the United Nations in recent years, Bahrain had enhanced its achievements in the area of family protection and social welfare.

61. It sought to protect all members of the family at all stages of their lives. For instance, article 5 (b) of its 1973 Constitution stipulated that the State guaranteed the social well-being of all its nationals and especially the elderly, the sick, the orphaned or widowed, and the unemployed. Its social security laws guaranteed social coverage for the elderly or the sick who for various reasons were not entitled to the social protection offered by the State. Moreover, as a result of its Arab tradition, the problem of the elderly did not arise at all in Bahrain as it did elsewhere. In Bahrain, older persons were well treated and respected by their families, who set great store by their wisdom.

62. With regard to youth, Bahrain was attempting to educate a new generation capable of promoting social development. Cultural, scientific and sports centres had been built in order to give young people all the necessary means to play a useful role in society.

63. Bahrain also attached great importance to the welfare of persons with disabilities. It had built a national rehabilitation centre for the disabled and sought to provide them with every facility for full participation in society.

64. The World Summit for Social Development had set forth principles which countries should apply according to their individual cultural characteristics in order to develop international cooperation in the field of social development. Bahrain was following with interest the activities carried out to implement the Declaration adopted in Copenhagen, promote social development and mobilize the international community to achieve sustainable economic and social progress.

65. Mrs. MESDOUA (Algeria) said that not only were the benefits of mankind's vast scientific and technical progress not always equitably distributed, but the gap between the haves and the have-nots was widening, both between and within countries. In a world were nations were becoming ever more tightly interconnected, only a joint effort by developed and developing countries could remedy that deterioration of the social situation and lead to tangible results in the field of development in general and social development in particular.

66. Having restored the social dimension to its rightful place in the development process and emphasized the urgent need for better linkage between economic and social factors in national and international policies, the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development constituted a real charter for social development which should inspire action on the part of States and United Nations agencies to establish, in close partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions, genuine ties of cooperation for sustainable economic and social development, of which the government agencies were another mainstay.

67. The problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration could not be solved without economic growth and democracy. Algeria was convinced that it was through such solutions that it would achieve development and national harmony and resolve the complex crisis facing it.

68. The 1989 Constitution legally guarantees all members of society the fundamental rights of the individual, social justice, and political equity in a climate of respect for pluralism and diversity. In so doing, it allowed for active cooperation involving the State, local communities, the private sector and civil society.

69. From an economic standpoint, Algeria, determined to undergo a painful but fruitful apprenticeship in the fight against underdevelopment, had undertaken an in-depth restructuring of its economic system in order to prepare for the passage from a centralized economy to one responsive to market forces. It was within that framework that the Algerian Government had taken measures regarding employment, the education of youth, the creation of small individual enterprises, and the setting up of a social protection network that would make it possible to offset the negative effects of the necessary structural adjustment programme. Yet all those measures, together with those taken by other developing countries, could bear fruit only with a return to national growth and the creation of a favourable international economic environment. The

international community must recognize the need for action based on respect for the right of all the Earth's inhabitants to development and dignity.

70. Mr. KIRKLAND (United States of America) said that implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development was primarily the responsibility of individual Governments, to be carried out through programmes designed specifically to meet their countries' needs. Since many countries, particularly African countries or those classified as less developed, were dependent for such activities on bilateral and multilateral assistance, Governments had agreed in the Copenhagen Declaration to complement structural adjustment programmes by enhancing targeted social development investment lending and orienting their sustainable development policies towards the creation of new productive employment in both the rural and urban sectors. In order to create employment, they had agreed to promote free markets and international cooperation in the areas of macroeconomic policy and liberalization of trade and investment. The success of those policies depended heavily on the existence of a strong and democratic civil society based on the universal principle of freedom of assembly and association, free of control by the State or political parties.

71. In that regard, the international financial institutions, specifically the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and United Nations agencies, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had already begun to examine ways of integrating social development programmes into structural adjustment plans. His delegation felt that it would be logical to call upon UNDP to coordinate multilateral assistance within country-specific programmes.

72. Since global budgetary constraints gave no hope that new and additional resources would be allocated for social development, Governments would have to make hard choices and shift some existing resources to programmes whose success had already been proved. The United Nations would also have to make the most efficient use of the resources available for social development and for all of its other programmes. Reform of the Organization was one of the major goals of his delegation as the United Nations marked its fiftieth anniversary.

73. Convinced that social development must mobilize the most valuable resource - people - in order to improve the life of every individual, the United States was committed to ensuring equal opportunity for all, including persons with disabilities, youth and older persons. It fully supported the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the efforts of the Special Rapporteur to monitor implementation of those Rules.

74. On the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, his delegation believed that youth, on which the future of all societies depended, must be protected from the dangers of society - disease, drugs, pollution, discrimination, homelessness, violence and war - and must be able to grow up in an environment that opened the doors of society to it. To that end, youth must have access to basic education regardless of gender, age or social or economic background. It would then be possible to achieve - before the year 2000, if possible - the goal of eradicating illiteracy.

75. The future must be prepared by helping youth, but older persons must also be helped to contribute to the present by finally tapping their knowledge and skills. In anticipation of the International Year of Older Persons to be observed in 1999, the United States strongly supported any programmes which used the skills of the able, just as much as it supported programmes which sought to protect the vulnerable.

76. The Fourth World Conference on Women had underlined the need to strengthen the family, within which parents must be able to shelter, nourish and educate their children, particularly the girl child. The United States delegation supported any such initiative leading to full and complete participation of all members of the family in society.

77. Mr. HOUANSOU (Benin) said that the unprecedented upheavals which the international community had experienced had led it to look more closely at social questions. The Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/50/84) was both a summary of current trends and a preliminary draft for the 1997 report on the same subject.

78. The globalization of the economy brought with it many drawbacks. The positive effects of the structural adjustment programmes were late in making themselves felt and those programmes had instead led to a partial fragmentation of the social sector and a rise in unemployment and crime. In fact, programmes to combat poverty and hunger and to improve health conditions, quality of housing, environmental sanitation and education had had to take second place to the requirements of structural adjustment, to such a degree that development priorities must be redefined. The conditions under which the right to development was realized must be rethought, even if that meant starting with a clean slate and abandoning the contemporary economic order which prevented two thirds of humanity from meeting their fundamental needs.

79. In the future social development must be an integral part of sustainable development as defined at the Rio Earth Summit: development with a human face. However, one must go beyond the collective awareness reflected in the Secretary-General's report to examine the sad fact, acknowledged at the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, that inaction led to stagnation and even backsliding. Rhetoric must be replaced by action, effectively applying the declarations and programmes of action adopted at the closing of the various conferences organized by the United Nations during that decade; that should contribute to the economic and social development of the developing countries and to achieving sustainable development in general.

80. Conflicts and natural catastrophes were creating increasing numbers of handicapped persons. Benin was applying the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities at the national level by taking steps to assist the least privileged members of society in the areas of prevention, rehabilitation and reinsertion.

81. The challenge of social development would be met only if all States succeeded in integrating children and young people - the future of the world,

women - players in sustainable development, older persons - the wisdom of the world, and the family in the social development process in all its aspects.

82. He mentioned the phenomenon of racism, racial and ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and other contemporary forms of intolerance which were spreading among young people and also deplored the use of children and young people as combat soldiers, a practice which constituted a real threat to world peace and could be countered only by improving education and awareness. To do so, States must accede without reservation to the various international instruments related to human rights.

83. Mr. COLOMA (Chile) noted with interest the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (A/50/374). With the appointment of a Special Rapporteur and the creation of a panel of experts to monitor the implementation of the Rules, there was no doubt that the necessary organizational framework had been put into place, which should encourage Governments to budget sufficient funds to apply the Rules at the national level.

84. As the Secretary-General had indicated in his report on the conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons (A/50/114), at the beginning of the twenty-first century one person in four would be over the age of 60. In Chile, for example, in 1959 47 per cent of the population had been under 20, whereas in the year 2025 they would probably represent only about 31 per cent of the population. The ageing of the population had reached such a level that it was modifying the social and economic structure of countries and had to be taken into account in planning development, especially in the areas of unemployment, production costs and new patterns of global demand.

85. In addition, it must be remembered that, on the personal level, ageing was synonymous with impoverishment in most developing countries where pensions were minimal. And, because of unemployment among young people, it was often difficult to have older persons play a role in society, making their situation even more tenuous in societies where only work granted social status.

86. Chile expressed its satisfaction that the International Plan of Action on Ageing had brought about greater awareness of the importance of that problem and welcomed the drafting of a timetable of work up until the year 2001 which, along with the plan, should help create the opportunities for dialogue necessary for making the importance of older persons in the transmission of values and in family life better understood, and for making the concept of productive ageing one of the key elements in national and international development plans and programmes.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.